

Rising While Black

A Qualitative Study on Black- led Gentrification and Socioeconomic Mobility in Central Harlem

**Briana Peppers
MS.UP Candidate
Thesis Spring 2016**

RISING WHILE BLACK

Briana Peppers and Dr. Clara Irazábal

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Abstract | 3 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Background | 7 |
| Literature Review | 25 |
| Research Design and Methodology | 33 |
| Results and Key Findings | 36 |
| Conclusion and Recommendations | 39 |
| References | 42 |
| Appendices | 45 |



“RACE TRUMPS CLASS FOR WHITES. CLASS TRUMPS RACE FOR BLACKS.”

-DIANE

ABSTRACT

Sixty one years have passed since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the lawful segregation of U.S. public schools. Yet today, research reveals persistent levels of high-minority and low-income segregation across the nations public schools. Education researchers are calling the phenomenon “resegregation.” Since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U.S. Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and even local school districts have attempted to economically and racially integrate the nations public schools. The impetus suggesting for minority children, living and going to school with mixed-income and racially diverse populations leads to better economic success in adulthood, than when minority children live and go to school with majority low-income and high-minority populations.¹ Furthermore, education policy is housing policy; that where there is segregated housing there is segregated schools.² Contemporary policy is efforts to facilitate mixed neighborhood and schools, in part, by building racially diverse and mixed income communities.

While existing research addresses the role of class on educational equality for low-income black students, it does so without specific scrutiny of the role of the black middle-class on education and neighborhood equality for low-income Black students. Thus, the following research question: (a) how can black-led gentrification impact education equality for low-income black students? This research used face-to face in-depth interviews

and focus groups to evaluate experiences, perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes about the research topic. The research is situated in the context of Central Harlem, the site of the Harlem Renaissance, the home of the greatest concentration of African Americans in Harlem, and the location of black-led gentrification.

The study shows gentrification by African Americans in Central Harlem does not follow traditional patterns of gentrification. In fact, race undermines the ability of the African American middle class neighbors to affect educational equality and upward mobility for lower income African Americans. In addition, in a serious pivot from the original research question, findings from the study mostly point towards the nuances of black-led gentrification. Given participants' confessed lack of, or minuscule, interaction with low-income blacks in educational settings, the focus on educational equality proved to be irrelevant. Participants did reveal, however, a rationale for the physical and social spaces they do engage in Central Harlem. These subtleties provide important underpinnings for which further theory may be developed on both black-led and minority-led gentrification.

Keywords

black middle class, gentrification, educational equality

¹ Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, & Lawrence Katz, *The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment* (New York, NY: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015).

² Heather Schwartz, *Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland* (Washington D.C.: The Century Foundation, 2010) 3.

“WE DON’T HAVE THE MIDDLE CLASS BLACK FAMILIES FROM THE PAST.”

-JOAN

INTRODUCTION

“I sensed the schools were hiding something, drugging us with false morality so that we could not see, so that we did not ask: Why-for us and only us-is the other side of free will and free spirits an assault upon our bodies?... When our elders presented schools to us, they did not present it as a place of high learning but as a means of escape from death and penal warehousing.”³

This is the essentialism of education for low-income African American students. For this group, education is a shield from the perils of their skin. Like Coates, education is about more than just learning, it is about survival, about avoidance of the dangers of life as an African American without education. This is also the quintessence of the nexus between urban planning and education. Urban planning has been criticized for failing to alleviate and at times even exacerbate exigent neighborhood conditions. In fact, planning has actually been responsible for producing conditions that yield the unembellished consequences of life as an African American without education. In the midst of malice polices, inattention and abandonment, and at times total decimation of entire communities of color, education has been viewed as a vehicle to escape such a life.

Since *Brown v. Board of Education*, federal as well as local governments have attempted a variety of efforts to economically and racially integrate the nations public schools. Yet, historic phenomena have encouraged a resource rich exodus of whites

to the suburbs, which consequentially has concentrated poverty and people of color in urban neighborhoods and schools. The resulting residential separation has created a dire challenge for educational equality. Some researchers even argue that education policy is housing policy⁴- that where there is segregated housing there are segregated schools; and furthermore, that economic and racial diversity in schools is a consequence of economic and racial diversity in neighborhoods. The results of such research argue that for minority children, living and going to school in mixed-income and racially diverse populations leads to better economic success in adulthood, than when minority children live and go to school with majority low-income and high-minority populations.

Today, cities are working to revitalize urban neighborhoods, and to reverse suburban flight. In addition, schools are confronting the causes and consequences of resegregation. The two fields- urban planning and education- appear to be beginning to realize their shared objective to improve life chances and better communities. The fields appear to be realizing the inextricability of the other in the success of their shared goal. The two are also realizing their shared methods.

As minority populations continue to grow and as gentrification persists, urban neighborhoods and schools are being charged with producing quality education while also balancing educational equity. The contemporary method of choice, in both planning and education, is to do so, in part, by

³ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2015) 26.

⁴ See Heather Schwartz, *Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland* (Washington D.C.: The Century Foundation, 2010) 3.

spatially integrating economic and racial groups. Thus, contemporary policy is making effort to facilitate and at times literally build mixed neighborhoods and schools. In doing so however, the partnership between urban planning and education runs the very familiar risk of liquidating low-income and/or minority communities. This is so because the policy of choice concerns integration as opposed to an effort to keep minorities communities in tact.

Existing research suggests low-income black students fare better economically in adulthood when they live and go to school with white middle-class students. However, the literature does not assess the value of the black middle-class in promoting educational equality for low-income African American students. This research sets out to contribute to this gap by evaluating the impact of the black middle class on neighborhood and school equality. Thus, the

following research questions: (a) how can the black middle class impact education equality for low-income black students?; (b) if controlled for income, does race matter in obtaining educational equality?; (c) how can urban planning impact mixed income African American neighborhoods and schools?

To respond to these questions the study uses in-depth interviews with ten middle income African Americans currently living or working in Central Harlem. Based on conventional socioeconomic markers of “gentrifiers,” these ten people represent a small sample of the black population currently gentrifying harlem. Key findings reveal gentrification by this group follows a different pattern than that of conventional gentrification by whites. Additionally, race appears to significantly cripple the ability of middle income african americans to stimulate or support the upward mobility of lower income blacks in the neighborhood.

BACKGROUND

Educational Inequality

The following statements are from a report published by the Century Foundation in 2010:

- In 2009 more than one-half of fourth and eighth graders who attended high-poverty schools failed the national reading test, compared to fewer than one in five students from the same grade levels who attended low-poverty schools.
- The average achievement gap between high- and low-poverty schools has remained virtually unchanged over the past ten years, and slightly exceeds the black-white student achievement gap.
- Children in low-income households derive substantial benefits from living and attending schools in economically integrated neighborhoods.⁵

Three challenges unfold when reflecting on these facts. The first is residential segregation. The second is the achievement gap between high-and low-poverty schools. The third is the resegregation of public schools. At the moment, these three challenges have coalesced to produce great differentials in educational equality for low-income African American students. Social science researchers and policymakers agree that housing policy matters to children. This is so because housing policy effects economic

integration and consequentially also racial integration.

Let us consider the first issue: residential segregation. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the lawful segregation of public schools. Coupled with existing suburban flight, the result was an increase in the exodus to the suburbs. Sixty-one years later cities across the nation still face startling racial and economic segregation. A recent study published by Stanford University education researchers, concludes that African Americans and Latinos “need higher incomes than whites to live in comparably affluent neighborhoods.” As a result, “middle-income black and Latino households are much more likely to live in poor neighborhoods— which tend to have weaker schools, more crime and bigger social problems — than whites or Asians who earn the same amount of money.”⁶ Based on this study and multiple others, it is clear that present day neighborhoods are still separated racially and economically. The effects are evidenced in school composition and performance.

Consider the second issue: the achievement gap between high-and low-poverty schools. Widespread, studies find that students perform at higher rates when they attend economically integrated schools.⁷ Research generally holds that factors such as peer exposure and expenditure per pupil influence student performance. Research also

⁵ Schwartz, 8.

⁶Edmund Andrews, Stanford Study Finds Blacks and Hispanics Need Higher Incomes than Whites to Live in Affluent Neighborhoods. *Stanford Graduate School of Education*. Retrieved from <https://ed.stanford.edu>

⁷ Schwartz, 8.

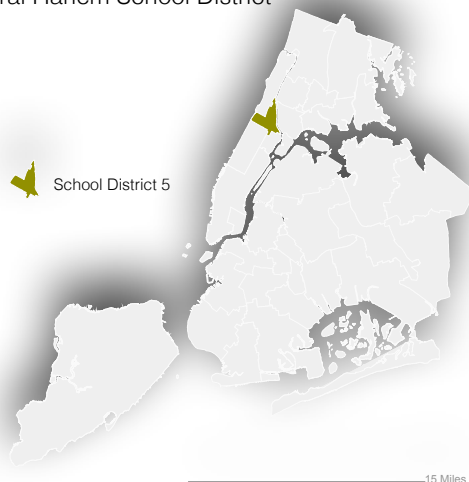
holds that race plays a role in both factors. Finally let us shed light on the third challenge: the resegregation of the public schools. Today public school segregation is the highest it has been since *Brown v. Board of Education*. In an article published by the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government Shorenstein Center:

“A 2012 report from UCLA’s Civil Rights Project...notes that “nationwide, the typical black student is now in a school where almost two out of every three classmates (64%) are low-income, nearly double the level in schools of the typical white or Asian student (37% and 39%, respectively).” The report... frames the evidence bluntly: “Fully 15% of black students, and 14% of Latino students, attend ‘apartheid schools’ across the nation, where whites make up 0 to 1% of the enrollment.”⁸

students enrolled in District 5 from 2011-2016 were African American. During this time whites comprised 2 to 4 percent of student enrollment. Moreover, Figure 3 shows at least 80% of all students enrolled in District 5 as living in poverty. In short, the primary school district in Central Harlem is both racially and economically segregated.

This phenomenon is central to this study. It is generally held that residential segregation impacts economic segregation, school composition, and subsequently school equality. How might these relationships change in light of the growing presence of middle-class African American families in Central Harlem?

Figure 1. Central Harlem School District



Such is the case in School District 5, which is illustrated in Figure 1. This is the primary school district for families in Central Harlem. Following “apartheid schools,” Figure 2 reveals at least 50 percent of

⁸ Journalist’s Resource. *School Resegregation, Race and America’s Future*. (2014). Retrieved from <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/education/school-segregation-race-americas-demographic-future-update-recent-research>.

Figure 2. Student Enrollment by Race

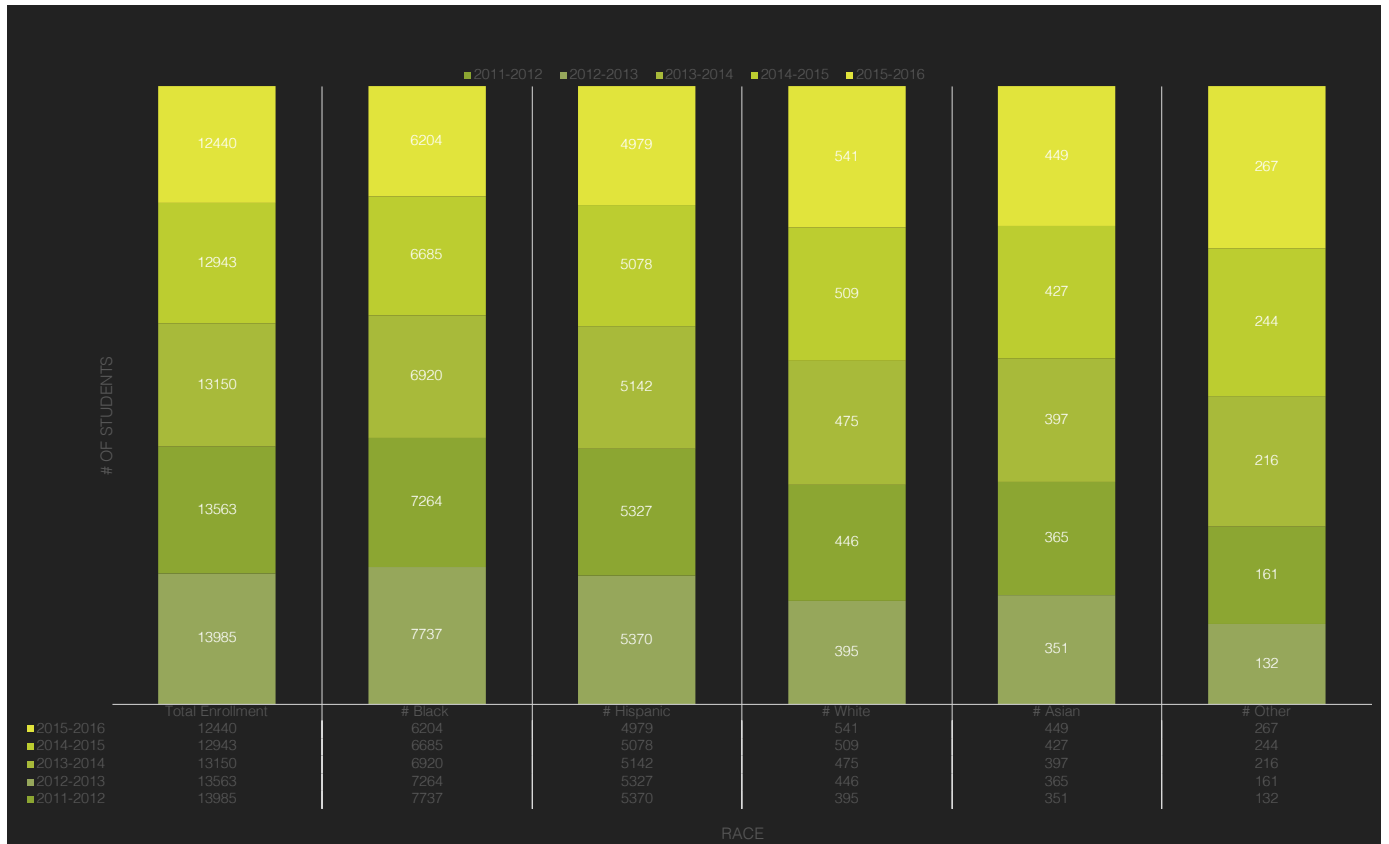


Figure 3. Student Enrollment by Income 2011-2016

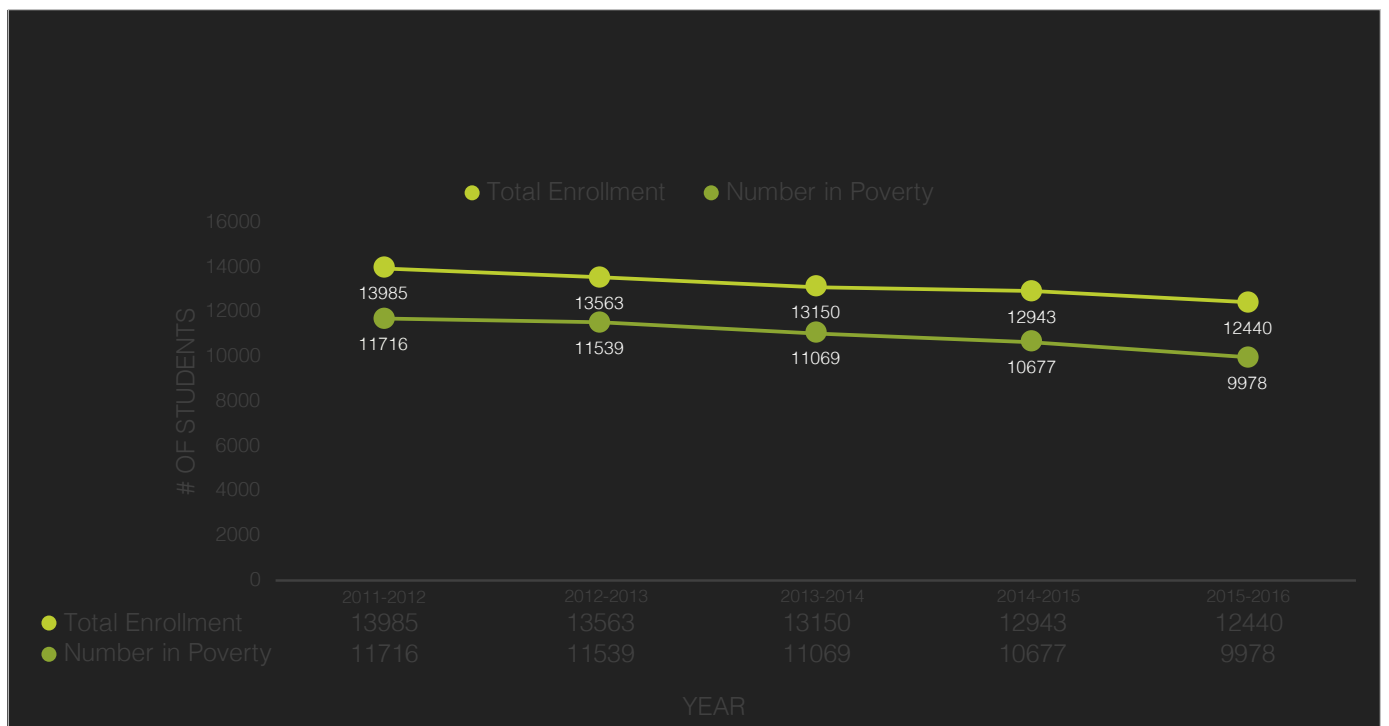


Figure 4. Community Districts in Harlem



Figure 5. Central Harlem Community District



The Beginnings of Blacks in Central Harlem

Neil Smith provides a thorough history of Harlem and its gentrification. He argues gentrification, or the “reinvestment in urban middle-class residential rehabilitation and redevelopment,” has become increasingly more “synchronized” with larger economic, political, and social restructuring.⁹ This process, which has become more frequent since the 1970’s has “systematically altered the physical landscapes and cultural and economic geographies of cities up and down the urban hierarchy.”¹⁰

According to Smith, this restructuring, which most recognizably takes shape in the form of residential changes, also involves professional, financial, commercial, recreational, cultural, and tourist spectacles.¹¹ That these changes are occurring in Harlem, as shown in Figure 4, is particularly revealing about the potency of gentrification.

Harlem was initially constructed as mixed middle-and working class area in the last decades of the nineteenth century.¹² It was thought of as an “upscale suburban community north of Manhattan.” Due to to hefty transportation costs, it was also considered as more of a “retreat or summer

⁹ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 136.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 138.

get away than a primary home.”¹³ Developers marketed Harlem as a exclusive and for the well to do. Freeman cites the New York times as having reported Harlem’s “reputation for attractiveness and exclusivity was hardly matched anywhere else in the city.”¹⁴ Furthermore, “Harlem’s physical condition in the early part of the twentieth century contributed to the perception that it was not a slum and inspired pride among its Black residents.”¹⁵ Its housing stock “generally comprised of five- to six-storey tenements along the north-south avenues, studded with town houses and brownstones on the cross-town streets,”¹⁶

Most of this housing stuck was built during the construction boom following the recession of 1873-1878. As construction in Manhattan expanded north, the accompanied elevated railway into “the recently annexed Harlem,” defined Harlem as a middle class suburb to the Manhattan to the south.¹⁷ In 1904-1905 yet another recession set in. Based on Smith, Speculators realized too many houses were constructed at one time” and the resulting glut led to widespread vacancies; “financial institutions no longer made loans to

Harlem speculators and building-loan companies, and many foreclosed on their original mortgages.”¹⁸ Consequentially, and what some historians have described as unprecedented, white landlords, owners, and real estate companies began opening up recently built apartments and houses to Black tenants and owners. Pandering to the fears of white racists and motivated blacks, white real estate agents encouraged white tenants to sell their homes at “deflated prices, then “raise the price for incoming black families on the grounds that they were moving into an exclusive middle class suburb.”¹⁹

Smith writes, “blacks in any case were known to pay higher rents for lower amounts of space.” This was due in part, to blacks’ limited housing options. Freeman notes, “blacks settlement in New York mirrored that of other cities prior to the great migration.”²⁰ Upon arrival “blacks were scattered a few small clusters that were universally undesirable.”²¹ “When the black population grew, blacks generally filled in existing neighborhoods where other blacks were

¹³ Lance Freeman, *There Goes the Hood*. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), 268 in Kindle Location.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Freeman, 278.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 281.

clustered, making these formerly mixed communities solidly black.”²²

Tenderloin and San Hill are two such examples. Nevertheless, racial tensions in these neighborhoods often boiled over into physical and violent confrontations.²³ As the white middle class moved to the suburbs and black migration from the South accelerated during World War I, Harlem’s population became increasingly Black.

Also contributing to the tanning of Central Harlem, was the entrepreneurship of a Black realtor named Philip A. Payton Jr. Payton “formed the Afro-American Realty Company,” which bought, managed, and sold properties including many that were leased to Black tenants.”²⁴ Using blacks notion of race pride, Payton sold to Black investors the promise of lucrative returns as well as the “opportunity to advance the race by contributing to the success of a black-owned business.”²⁵ Freeman writes, “by investing in a black company that aimed to establish a

black community in Harlem, African Americans were a driving force behind the establishment of Harlem as a black mecca.”²⁶ “When offered the opportunity to move into improved conditions in Harlem, many blacks jumped at the chance.”²⁷

In this way, Harlem began slightly different from other “Black Belts.” In essence, instead of Harlem developing strictly as a consequence of blacks being steered towards an undesirable neighborhood, Harlem as a black mecca developed as a result of blacks’ conscious decision to develop a community in Harlem.²⁸ “Choosing Harlem as the site of the burgeoning Black community, was in essence a crucial act of agency.”²⁹ This pattern of settlement is important. It demonstrates the unique way in which Harlem was developed and cultivated as a Black neighborhood in one of the most attractive neighborhood in New York City. “Thus, Harlem, a community originally intended for upscale whites, along with landlords willing to rent to blacks to recoup

²² Ibid., 298.

²³ Ibid., 285.

²⁴ Ibid., 291.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 288.

²⁸ Ibid., 295.

²⁹ Ibid., 308.

their investment, provided the push for African Americans.”³⁰

Freeman notes, “Harlem was a physical manifestation of the “new Negro.”³¹ “The new Negro represented a new way of thinking and relation to the nonblack world. Rather than relying on whites, the new Negro would blaze his own trails and knock down barriers before him.”³² Most important, “rather than being kept down, held back, or helped up, the new Negro acted to improve his condition and that of his race.”³³

This new attitude, along with the crescendoing race pride associated with post-World War I era, reverberated in the Harlem Renaissance. A period which lasted circa 1920 though the mid 1930’s, Freeman describes it as, “an artistic moment whereby black art was used to trumpet the humanity of the race and expose the absurdity of Jim Crow and other racist ideas.”³⁴ Moreover, perhaps more than desirability of the neighborhood, it was this movement which made the neighborhood famous.³⁵ True to its reputation, Harlem was indeed a mecca for

blacks around the world. In terms of population, literary rates, and employment, the demographic and socioeconomic profile of Harlem “compared favorably to other black betls.”³⁶ At the center of Harlem Renaissance, and Marcus Garvey’s back to Africa movement, Harlem came to represent “the aspirations for what Blacks could achieve.”³⁷ Furthermore, “for a few generations out of slavery and still in the clutches of serfdom in much of the South, this was an enormous source of pride...It was truly a physical and spatial manifestation of the new Negro.”³⁸

Decline in Central Harlem

Most new construction ceased at the beginning of World War I. During the great depression, housing disinvestment worsened.

“There would be little significant private reinvestment in Harlem until the 1980s except for undertakings that were partly or wholly funded by the state (largely in the 1950s and 1960s), and the population that concentrated in the area was overwhelmingly poor and

³⁰ Ibid., 288.

³¹ Ibid., 318.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 321.

³⁴ Ibid., 322.

³⁵ Ibid., 335.

³⁶ Ibid., 332.

³⁷ Ibid., 345.

³⁸ Ibid.

working class. By the time that Harlem again made international headlines in the 1960s, it had been transformed into a slum and quickly became the most notorious symbol of black deprivation in the US.”³⁹ Freeman asserts, however, Harlem’s decline began brewing congruent to its Renaissance.⁴⁰ The housing discrimination blacks faced “limited the physical boundaries of black Harlem and shut out blacks in most other neighborhoods of the city.” This led to severe overcrowding. In addition, “Harlem was designed not just for the elite and upper middle class, but also for families with a husband, wife, and children.”⁴¹ “Many of the residents were immigrants who were single or had left their family in their homelands. As a result, the housing built for families did not fit their needs.”⁴² Taking in boarders became a means to overcome the challenges of the mismatch in housing stock and discrimination in the broader housing market. Coupled with the limited opportunities in education and employment, The Great Depression concentrated all the social problems associated within poverty in this small community. As whites moved to the suburbs, upwardly blacks sought neighborhoods outside of Harlem. According to Freeman,

this combination of factors, overcrowding, overuse of the housing stock, concentrated social ills, and the exodus of upwardly mobile Harlemites created a fragile base for a neighborhood that would eventually suffer from the above mentioned disinvestment.⁴³

The last point, middle class exodus is especially important. “Continuing into the post World War II era, reaching its zenith during the 1970’s, Harlem landlords were faced with rising maintenance costs but only the poorest of tenants. For many, then, it made more sense to abandon or set fire to their property to collect insurance.”⁴⁴ Notes Freeman, “the precipitous decline in population left a neighborhood pockmarked by abandoned buildings and vacant storefronts as merchants saw their customer base shrivel.”⁴⁵

Gentrification in Central Harlem

By the late 1990’s Harlem was considered to have experienced a second Renaissance. Following Smith’s delineation, changes in housing stock and demographics are the most recognizable feature of this process. Empty lots were replaced with “renovated housing, upscale restaurants, chain stores, and the first Starbucks in Harlem

³⁹ Smith.,139.

⁴⁰ Freeman, 356.

⁴¹ Ibid., 359.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 376.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 394.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 398.

on 125th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard.”⁴⁶ In addition, “whites became an increasing presence as residents or visitors.”⁴⁷ Today, Throughout Harlem, affordable, moderate, and market rate housing continues to be developed. The change in residents reflects this process.

The tables below address changes in resident demographics. Illustrated in Figure 5, Community District 10, or Central Harlem, offers a unique case study on gentrification in for two reasons. First, in spite of the influx of white residents, Central Harlem is still what most would consider a Black neighborhood. Table 1 shows in 2010, 63 percent of residents in Community District 10, or Central Harlem, were black/African American Nonhispanic. Likewise, Central Harlem is consistently home to greatest number of Black/African American residents in comparison to West Harlem and East Harlem. But Table 1 also reveals the rapid influx of White Nonhispanic residents.

Smith asserts “During the last two decades of the twentieth century, according to the census, only 4–7 percent of Central Harlem residents were nonblack.”⁴⁸ Shown in Table 1, by 2010 this number had increased to approximately 36 percent with 9.5 percent being of White Nonhispanic origin. This composition is atypical. It is widely held that heavily black neighborhoods are perceived as harder to gentrify.⁴⁹ In addition, “because many of the black urban neighborhoods had been targeted earlier by urban renewal, and

because white middle- class gentrifiers have generally been less squeamish about moving into white working- class areas, the earliest neighborhoods affected by gentrification have been disproportionately white or at least mixed.”⁵⁰

In addition to race, income variables are also shifting. Table 2 demonstrates an increase in owner occupied housing from 2000 to 2010 while Table 3 shows a decrease in the percentage of the population receiving income support. What is evident, is a shift from a predominately Black working class neighborhood to a mixed middle income neighborhood. What is also apparent is although the neighborhood is becoming home to a wealthier resident base, the neighborhood schools are still mostly attended by low income students. Recall from Figure 3, 80 percent of all students enrolled in District 5 in the last five years were marked as living in poverty.

Gentrification in Central Harlem is also unique for a second reason: black middle class families are opting to move into the neighborhood. The scholarship on residential segregation reveals that even within a given race, neighborhoods may still be separated by class. As the literature review will discuss, the upper black middle class generally opts to live in neighborhoods exclusive of poor blacks. Others, such as the stable black middle class, tend to live congruent to poor blacks and sometimes in the same

⁴⁶ Ibid., 418.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

neighborhood. But in Harlem, the tune is slightly different.

A script where whites are the driving force behind gentrification whereas blacks are bystanders who are displaced, however, does not aptly describe the gentrification processes under way in either Clinton Hill or Harlem... the notion that gentrification, once begun, erases poor minorities from a neighborhood overnight and deserves serves rethinking, and that the transition period can be a long one worthy of study.⁵¹

In short, the black middle class is returning to Harlem.⁵² Although not everyone agrees such a phenomena is at work. Some scholars are skeptical of the possibility of black-led gentrification arguing the “pool of would-be black gentrifiers was too small to foster black-led gentrification.”⁵³ According to Freeman, “the continued growth of the black middle class in the 1990’s meant that a critical mass of potential black gentrifiers was beginning ginning to form during this time. For example, the number of blacks with at least a college degree grew from 1.9 million in 1990 to 3.4 million in 2002, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. In New York City, the number of blacks with at least a college degree grew from 155,000 to 202,000.”⁵⁴ Although “black educational attainment in Harlem is better than that of the rest of New York City, the narrowing of this gap in the late 1980’s and 1990’s can be

interpreted as a sign of the black middle class presence in Harlem.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ Freeman, 686-691.

⁵² Ibid., 700.

⁵³ Ibid., 704-705.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 710.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 715-716.

Table 1. Percent of Change Total Population
Community District 10

| | 2000 | | 2010 | | Change 2000-2010 | |
|---|----------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Total Population | 107, 109 | 100.0 | 115,723 | 100.0 | 8,614 | 8.0 |
| Black/African American NonHispanic | 82, 750 | 77.3 | 72,858 | 63.0 | (9,892) | -12.0 |
| Hispanic Origin | 18,019 | 16.8 | 25,692 | 22.2 | 7,673 | 42.6 |
| White NonHispanic | 2,189 | 2.0 | 11,050 | 9.5 | 8,861 | 404.8 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander NonHispanic | 938 | 0.9 | 2,833 | 2.4 | 1,895 | 202.0 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native NonHispanic | 372 | 0.3 | 356 | 0.3 | (16) | -4.3 |
| NonHispanic of Two or More Races | 2,646 | 2.5 | 2,572 | 2.2 | (74) | -2.8 |
| Some Other Race NonHispanic | 195 | 0.2 | 362 | 0.3 | 167 | 85.6 |

Data from NYC Department of City Planning

Table 2. Percent of Change Housing Tenure
Community District 10

| | 2000 | | 2010 | | Change 2000-2010 | |
|------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Total Housing Units | 53,261 | - | 55,513 | - | 2,252 | 4.2 |
| Occupied Housing Units | 45,734 | 100.0 | 49,670 | 100.0 | 3,936 | 8.6 |
| Renter Occupied | 42,734 | 93.4 | 43,479 | 87.5 | 745 | 1.7 |
| Owner Occupied | 3,000 | 6.6 | 6,191 | 12.5 | 3,191 | 106.4 |

Data from NYC Department of City Planning

Table 3: Percent of Change Income Support
Community District 10

| | 2005 | 2012 |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Cash Assistance TANF | 11,139 | 8,472 |
| Supplemental Security Income | 8,827 | 9,016 |
| Medicaid Only | 28,503 | 31,911 |
| Total Persons Assisted | 48,469 | 49,399 |
| Percent of the Population | 45.3 | 42.7 |

Data from NYC Department of City Planning







PLEASE
UP
YOU







“IT’S A PREMIUM FOR SOME AND TAX FOR OTHERS”

-JAMES

LITERATURE REVIEW

Few existing scholarship assess the value of black middle-class in promoting educational equality for low-income African American students. This is of particular import in the current moment, as African American's are a part of the gentrifying class. This research sets out to contribute to filling this gap by evaluating the impact of the black middle class on neighborhood and school equality. Thus, research on three major themes are reviewed: (a) the black middle class, (b) segregation and school quality, and (c) the role of schools in marketing cities.

The Black Middle Class

As the nomenclature suggests, the black middle class is defined by race and ethnicity as well as class position. In, *The Black Middle Class in America: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, authors Durant and Loudon state three elements of the definition of the black middle-class: (1) objective and subjective class criteria; (2) race and ethnicity; and (3) the reference group which defines and evaluates class criteria and which assigns status rewards.⁵⁶ The first, is the quantifiable class position of the group as well as the members' own opinion of their class status. The third, the reference group, is

the group of people who assign class and its rewards.

According to Durant and Loudon, in a period of slightly more than one hundred years (1865-1970), the black middle-class increased from a small group of "free Negroes" to a sizable stratum of the black population.⁵⁷ Between 1899 and 1981, the black middle-class, whose reference group was the black community, began to emerge toward the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ One of the groups primary roles was to advance the "Negro race" and to create conditions under which lower-class African Americans could elevate themselves.⁵⁹ During this period, however, class differentiation and social mobility developed within the black community.⁶⁰

Post emancipation and into the early decades of the twentieth century, the authors cite the following major factors as influencing the expansion of and the changes to the black middle- class.⁶¹

- (1) industrialization created a demand for industrial jobs;
- (2) urbanization or the concentration of blacks in high density metropolitan areas increased the interaction among persons of common economic positions. This facilitated the development of class

⁵⁶ Thomas Durant and Joyce Loudon. *The Black Middle Class in America: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Phylon. (Atlanta, Georgia, 1986). 47(4) 261.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 254.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 255.

consciousness, and thus enhanced the formation of social classes;

- (3) occupational differentiation created opportunities for blacks in skilled, semi-skilled, and professional positions in the labor force;
- (4) educational attainment increased, although within segregated institutions of unequal economic support;
- (5) business entrepreneurship led to property ownership and the accumulation of capital; and
- (6) organized collective actions of educational, religious, business, fraternal, and political groups contributed to the communal pooling of resources to enhance opportunities for a few. In addition, historical events, such as political progress during the reconstruction Period, career opportunities and benefits created by World Wars I and II, and rural-to-urban migration, served as positive forces which accelerated the growth of the black middle class.

Today, Durant and Loudon argue the modern black middle-class is still a “relatively young group, largely becoming visible during the 1950’s.”⁶² Its continued expansion, is largely a result of reasons similar to its initial growth, such as, increase in educational attainment, socioeconomic opportunities, occupational differentiation, and lessened racial barriers.

The Contemporary Black Middle-Class

In spite of increasing research, it is still challenging to define the black middle-class. In part, because researchers have yet to agree on a definition. For this reason, the definition of middle-class and of black middle-class, tends to vary. For the purposes of the present paper, however, I borrow a definition from existing research.

Karyn Lacy is part of a growing body of researchers attempting to increase the scholarship on the experiences and challenges of the black middle-class. In her seminal text, *Blue Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*, Lacy uses ethnography and in-depth interviews to explore black middle-class identity construction in three suburbs of Washington DC. Overall, the text describes the ways in which the black middle-class is not as well protected from the perils of the labor market as the white middle-class. This is due in part to the absence of wealth and the contribution of discrimination in the workplace.⁶³ Similarly, the black middle-class, while perhaps having attained middle income, still face social and structural impairment to accessing overall middle-class privileges and culture.

Nevertheless, Lacy refutes the scholarship that supports the perception that middle-class black and white families are different, “suggesting that racial disparities in middle-class indicators (wealth, housing, and income) perpetuate glaring inequalities between blacks and whites, even when the

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ See Runnymede Perspectives, *The Runnymede School Report: Race, Education, and Inequality in Contemporary Britain* (London, UK: London School of Economics, 2015).

individuals occupy the same class.”⁶⁴ Instead she argues, “some aspects of everyday life are similar for all middle class people regardless of race.”⁶⁵ Such aspects may include living in highly desirable neighborhoods, exclusive private schools, and professional occupations. Even some black middle-class families have never had to endure economic hardship. For this reason, Lacy stratifies the black middle-class into two groups: the fragile middle-class and the stable middle-class.⁶⁶ Members of these two groups do not necessarily share socioeconomic circumstances, privileges, or even neighborhoods. For example, in the neighborhoods of the upper middle-class, poor blacks are generally not present.

The Two Groups

According to Lacey, the fragile black middle-class is a “group that falls behind the white middle class on key measures of middle class status (wealth, housing, and income); and the stable black middle class, is a groups that is virtually indistinguishable from its white counterpart on most standard economic indicators.”⁶⁷ The lower middle-class or what Lacy sometimes calls the “fledgling middle-class,” are the focus of most contemporary sociological research. This group does not share socioeconomic circumstances with the upper black-middle class or the white middle-class. As a group, they earn between \$30,000

and 49,999 annually. They do not hold a college degree and they are concentrated in sales or clerical positions as opposed to professional occupations. Lacy writes, this group “resembles the blue collar class that emerged in Detroit as a result of the tremendous expansion of the auto industry.”⁶⁸ In addition, this group makes up the bulk of the total black middle-class population. In the year 2000, the group made up sixty five percent of the black middle-class. Interestingly, the fragile black middle-class also tend to live in racially segregated neighborhoods that are either inclusive of the black poor or neighboring poor black neighborhoods. Within these communities, the fragile middle-class also typically live with high crime rates, poor municipal services, and underperforming schools.⁶⁹ This in contrast to the stable black-middle class.

According to Lacy, the stable black-middle class shares socioeconomic circumstances which closely resemble that of the white middle-class. Members of this group work as doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, and corporate managers. Essentially, this group is employed in professional occupations with require at least a bachelors degree. Annually, households in the group earn more than \$50,000. In 2000, the stable middle-class made up thirty five percent of the total black middle-class

⁶⁴ Lacy, R. K. (2007). *Blue Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

population. Furthermore, in terms of occupation, educational attainment, income and housing, the top segment of the black middle class is equal to the white middle class. For instance, this group tends to live in neighborhoods in that do not contain the poor black. The key distinction, then, is therefore a matter of degree.⁷⁰ This degree of differential is evident at the level of the neighborhood.⁷¹

Authors, LeGates and Stout describe the community stratification perspective.⁷² Essentially, the theory contends the black community is a heterogeneous structure comprising both ethnic unity and diversity of social classes, life-styles, and attitudes.⁷³ Similar to that of Lacy, this theoretical framework stratifies the black middle-class into three groups: upper-middle (professional), middle- middle (white-collar and clerical workers), and lower-middle (skilled blue- collar workers).⁷⁴ Dissimilar to Lacy, however, the community stratification perspective also describes what the three groups share in common. Durant and Loudon summarize: “these groups share in common high achievement motivation, a tradition of family stability, high religiosity, a high regard for property ownership, a sustained history of political participation, social striving, and consumption of durable goods.”⁷⁵ This perspective, then, is important because it

emphasizes the significance of community in black middle-class identity construction and negotiation.

Durant and Loudon write:

this perspective implies the community stratification may be influenced by a combination of factors, including social class differentiation, internal unity, economic diversity, external diversity, and external social, economic and political forces. This quest for community, and its influence by dual reference groups, is the real "dilemma" of the modern black middle class.⁷⁶

Black-led Gentrification

As mentioned above, scholars on gentrification do not agree on the salience of black-led gentrification. In fact, some contest the sheer existence of the phenomenon. Hence, the gap in scholarship on the subject. Freeman, however, does do the work of theorizing the middle income blacks who have returned to inner city black neighborhoods. He posits for middle class blacks who came of age in the post civil rights era, the allure of appropriating white culture paled in comparison to celebrating all things black. (745). This was both influenced by and evident in domains from art and music

⁷⁰ Lacy, 259.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Richard LeGates & Frederic Stout, *The City Reader*, (2011), New York, New York: Rutledge Publishing.

⁷³ Durant and Loudon, *Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, 259.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

to neighborhoods. Hence, inner city black neighborhoods with their black owned business and black history fits neatly within this post civil rights resurgence in racial pride. The return is in essence a rejection of white suburbia and a desire for exposure to black culture.

Residential Segregation and Educational Inequities

Residential segregation is the backdrop to existing research that contends integration is key in strengthening schools and subsequently in promoting neighborhoods. An examination of related literature reveals nationwide urban neighborhoods continue to be racially segregated. Consider the results from Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez, in their groundbreaking study on the geography of intergenerational mobility in the United States.

This research uses the incomes of more than 40 million children and their parents to measure intergenerational mobility. The researchers make three major conclusions. First, an increase in a parents income is associated with an increase in a child's income. Second, intergenerational mobility varies across geographic regions of the U.S. In other words, some regions have higher mobility than others. Third, neighborhoods with the highest mobility have (a) less residential segregation, (b) less income inequality, (c) better primary schools,

(d) greater social capital, (d) better family stability.⁷⁷

In another study on inequality, Reardon uses data from the decennial census and the American Community Survey to investigate how neighborhood composition in the U.S. over the last two decades varies by race, income, and metropolitan area. The research finds “racial differences in the neighborhood context, even among households with the same annual income.”⁷⁸ For example, nationwide, Black and Latino families typically live in neighborhoods where the median income is lower than in the neighborhoods where similar-income white families live. In major cities, the disparity increases. Even more jarring, the study finds that poor whites live in neighborhoods where the median income is higher than the typical neighborhood of a black family with the same income. In short, “there is often a mismatch between level of education and income of middle class African American families and the types of neighborhoods in which they reside.”⁷⁹ Within these mismatched pairings, the quality of the homes, the quality of finance terms, and rates of homeownership are also unequal.

Not only do Whites own more homes than Blacks, but the median value of the home and home equity are less for Black homeowners. Homes owned by Blacks tend to be older, have less square footage, and less lot size per acre. Black families also pay higher interest

⁷⁷ See National Bureau of Economic Research, *Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014).

⁷⁸ Sean Reardon, Lindsay Fox, and Joseph Townsend, *Neighborhood Income Composition by Race and Income, 1990-2009* (Philadelphia, PA, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 2015) 660(1)78-97.

⁷⁹ Cecily Hardaway & Vonnice Mcloyd, *Escaping Poverty and Securing Middle Class Status: How Race and Socioeconomic Status Shape Mobility Prospects for African Americans During the Transition to Adulthood*, (Journal of Youth and Violence, 2009) 38(2) 246.

rates and largely miss out on the 60 billion dollars a year in mortgage interest tax deductions. These findings offer major implications for the impact of residential limitation and mobility...African Americans are more likely than Whites with similar incomes to use subprime lenders when refinancing their homes, increasing their risk for foreclosure.⁸⁰

This inequity is intergenerational. Patrick Sharkey argues racial inequality has barely changed since the civil rights movement. Furthermore, that harmful political decisions and social policies have led to the decline of black neighborhoods. As a result the neighborhood inequality that existed circa the civil rights movement has been passed down intergenerationally. The text is both a discussion on the lack of racial progress in American politics and neighborhoods and a policy agenda on how to improve black neighborhoods.

Residency also brings into focus family structure. In their analysis of the role of neighborhood on the acquisition of black middle-class status, Reardon et al., as well as Durant and Loudon fail to thoroughly investigate the relationship between the neighborhood and family structure on mobility. In a recent article researchers Cecily Hardaway and Vonnice Mcloyd identify family, community, structural factors related to social mobility for African Americas

during the transition to adulthood.⁸¹ Essentially the research considers how race and class affect opportunities for social mobility through where African Americans live, whom they associate with, and how they are impacted by racial and class-related stigma. Of particular interest within social mobility is family structure. According to Hardaway and Mcloyd, “the link between parental income and adult child economic status remains, even after adult children’s education is controlled.”⁸² In other words, the socioeconomic status of an adult child is linked to parental socioeconomic status. Essentially, “compared to individuals who did not grow up poor, adults who grew up in poor families earn less income, complete fewer years of school, and are over three times as likely to be poor as adults.”⁸³

In the peculiar case of the black middle-class, however, individuals who grow up middle-class, tend to slide down the socioeconomic ladder in adulthood.⁸⁴ Thus, at times, they face the same neighborhood perils as those born into lower socioeconomic statuses. Hardaway and Mcloyd point towards the link between family and community. Based on the study, there are two forms of discrimination: reward bias and developmental bias. The first involves rewarding different racial groups unequally for the same achievements. The second, and of particular important to this review, involves excluding a group from realizing

⁸⁰ Ibid, 248.

⁸¹ Hardaway & Mcloyd, 242.

⁸² Ibid, 243.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Gillian White, “How Black Middle Class Kids become Poor Adults,” (2015).

their full potential. Segregated neighborhoods and schools limits the ability of African Americans to develop maximum human capital and to “obtain the skills, training, and credentials equal to their white counterparts.”⁸⁵ This theory posits relationships are critical to mobility as they aid in the creation of vital social and cultural capital. The neighborhood facilitates the development or limitation of these relationships; hence, Hardaway and Mcloyd’s apt linkage between social networks, community, and mobility.

These findings offer major implications for the effect of segregation on neighborhoods. Massey and Denton even go so far as to that such tactics are the impetus of the urban underclass. These conclusions are also important to educational equality. Within education research, it is widely held that racial and socioeconomic segregation adversely impacts upward mobility and educational equity for historically marginalized students.⁸⁶ Respectively, Cashin and Kozol agree, segregation is “undermining the American Dream and yielding contemporary “apartheid schooling.”⁸⁷ Each contributes to underperforming urban schools mostly attended by low-income students of color. This has bequeathed the sense that

education policy is housing policy.⁸⁸ In a recent article, the Brookings Institute cites five facts about black opportunity. At least one considers race, segregation, and school quality.

...black students attend worse schools. The school system remains highly segregated by race and economic status: black students make up 16 percent of the public school population, but the average black student attends a school that’s 50 percent black. Our colleague Jonathan Rothwell shows that the average black student also attends a school at the 37th percentile for test score results whereas the average white student attends a school in the 60th percentile.⁸⁹

A shared interest of both planning and education professionals is to improve urban schools and neighborhoods; the former profession, with an emphasis on schools and the latter with an emphasis on renewing neighborhoods via schools. Bloomfield Cucchiara explains schools have become an amenity for urban planners who are trying to revitalize urban neighborhoods and attract families back to the city.⁹⁰ Similarly, Lareau and Goyette, use interviews and data analysis to investigate the relationship between

⁸⁵ Cecily Hardaway & Vonnice Mcloyd, *Escaping Poverty*, 250.

⁸⁶ Greg Duncan and Richard Murnane, *Restoring Opportunity: The Crisis of Inequality and the Challenge for American Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)

⁸⁷ Sheryll Cashin, *The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class are Undermining the American Dream* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004); Jonathan Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2005).

⁸⁸ Schwartz, 3.

⁸⁹ Richard Reeves & Edward Rodrigue. (2015). *Five Bleak Facts on Black Opportunity*. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2015/01/15-mlk-black-opportunity-reeves>.

⁹⁰ Bloomfield Cucchiara, (2013), *Marketing Schools Marketing Cities: Who Wins and Who Loses when Schools become Urban Amenities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

education and neighborhood inequality. Finally, Schwartz finds, “children in low-income households derive substantial benefits from living and attending schools in economically integrated neighborhoods.⁹¹ To do this, Schwartz specifically argues for the integration of low-income housing within market rate housing.

⁹¹ Schwartz, 8.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Methods and Data Sources

This study employed snowball sampling to recruit research participants. Initial participants were selected from the student researchers local network. Data was collected from both in-depth interviews as well as a questionnaire.

Selection of Site

This research is situated in the context of Central Harlem. Located in Community District 10, Central Harlem is bound by four major boundaries: Harlem River to the north, Central Park to the south and the Fordham Cliffs to the west, and Fifth Avenue to the East. It has a population of approximately 120,000 people. It occupies 1.5 square miles of relatively flat land.⁹² Dissimilar to the other community districts which comprise Harlem (community district 9 and community district 11), Central Harlem is the site of the historic black belt mentioned above. It is the site of the Harlem Renaissance. Furthermore, in comparison to West and East Harlem, Central Harlem is home to the greatest number of blacks. Today 63% Harlemites identify as black or African American, thereby maintaining the reputation of Harlem as a Black neighborhood.⁹³ Lastly, as pointed out by Freeman, Central Harlem is the location of the second and current Harlem Renaissance, with ongoing public and private investment in housing, an influx of whites, chain stores, and most importantly educated blacks. Taken together, these factors can be interposed as a sign of gentrification. Most importantly however, the narrowing of

increased education level of black Harlemites points especially towards the presence of black middle class people living in Harlem.

In-depth interviews

The research employed face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interview. All interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis. Candidates were selected based on three main criteria: he/she must be currently or have lived or worked in Central Harlem; self identify as African American and middle income; come at the recommendation of another participant. The purpose was to gather from participants in-depth and direct responses pertaining to the research question. A review of data on school enrollment from the NYC Department of Education, indicates mixed income but mostly black schools are rare. The in-depth interviews are valuable, as the participants, being members of African American middle class in Central Harlem, can directly attest to where and why their children go to school elsewhere.

Over a period of four months 7 interviews were conducted. Although each interview was deigned to take 60 minutes, the mode time was 90 minutes. Thus, the method accrued approximately 15 hours of interview material. With the exception of 3 participants, all interviews were conducted in public settings. The others were conducted in the homes of the participants and over the phone.

⁹² New York City Department of City Planning, Manhattan Community District 10 Profile, Retrieved from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb10/html/about/about.shtml>.

⁹³ Ibid.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire allowed interview participants to self-report descriptive data. The design inquired about race/ethnicity, income, age, sex and gender, education, place of residence, occupation, and if the parental participants have children who received free or reduced lunch. However, given the participant criteria, none of the children of the interviewers received free or reduced lunch. This question was designed to be a proxy for income.

“WE LOVE LIVING AND HANGING WITH WHITE PEOPLE. WE LOVE THE WORD INTEGRATION.”

-JAMES

RESULTS & KEY FINDINGS

The initial research inquired about role of the African American middle class on educational equality for low income African American students. The broader yet unasked question being, what happens when people of color gentrify neighborhoods of color? Additionally, what responsibility does the African American middle class have towards the upward mobility of low income African American neighborhoods? The assumption of each question being that gentrification by African Americans in Central Harlem has some impact on African Americans of lower socioeconomic statuses. On the contrary, the methodology revealed the following key findings on gentrification by African Americans in Central Harlem:

1. While residents or employees in Central Harlem, middle income African Americans do not mix socially and educationally with low income African Americans.
 - a. African American gentrifiers maintain social relationships with each other. They

Although the original question inquired about education, the research methodology brought about a different topic: class segregation within the African American race. While conducting interviews the idea of middle income blacks influencing the educational equality, or upward mobility of lower income africans quickly fell to the waste side. As stated by the first finding, this is mostly due to the lack of mixing between members of differing socioeconomic groups within the African American race. Pattillo as well Lacey noted this occurrence.

send their children to school with whites of equal or grater economic status in predominately white neighborhoods.

2. Exposure to values, customs, and cultures espoused by middle income or wealthy whites is an important factor in socialization and educational decisions for middle income African Americans.
3. Gentrification by African Americans does not follow the same pattern as that of traditional gentrification.
 - a. African American gentrifiers do not “pioneer” existing institutions, such as schools. Instead African American gentrifiers tend to patron institutions once they have been gentrified by whites.
 - b. African American gentrifiers do not translate their socioeconomic status into neighborhood improvement.
 - c. Gentrification by African Americans does not bring about a change in cultural and economic geography.

William Julius Wilson has also done so with his thesis the that the movement of the black middle class away from ghettos facilitated the separation of blacks from varying socioeconomic groups.⁹⁴ While this research does not dispute these findings, it does complicate the matter. This is so because middle income African Americans are moving back into low income African American neighborhoods. They are, in effect, African American gentrifiers. Interestingly, however, even with moving back, there are only certain domains in which the group mixes.

⁹⁴ William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

For example, with regard to education, the group does not tend to send their children to the local public schools. Instead they send their children to elite mostly white private schools in other neighborhoods in the New York metropolitan area. From this finding at least one theme emerges: for middle class blacks class transmission and upward mobility is hinged on quality education. What is more, for middle class blacks, the presence of white middle income or wealthy families in an academic institution is an indicator of quality education. This is also an opportunity for the group to expose their children to the morays of white elites.

To that end, a second theme emerges: exposure to white middle class culture is viewed as a necessary factor of socialization in order to encourage upward mobility of back middle class children. Socializing their children with lower income blacks or even other middle class black children is not enough to encourage secure and exponential socioeconomic mobility of their children. As a result, social mixing of the classes is not readily observed in this neighborhood. Furthermore, the traditional pioneering of existing resources is also not readily observed.

As one interviewee put it, “we we will not be the first. We can not afford to be the first. We do not play with education. If the whites do it first then we will do it, but we will not be the first.” In traditional

gentrification, whites tend to integrate and/or entrepreneur neighborhood institutions such as grocery stores and schools. Part of the tension then becomes the displacement of not only people, but also of culture. In the case of African American gentrification, however, this pioneering effect is absent. These gentrifiers, although black, still do not integrate or start neighborhood institutions. Instead they outsource their neighborhood needs. It is as if they are strictly residents in the neighborhood with no further use.

Hence, this group of African American gentrifiers does not observably use their socioeconomic power to change or improve the neighborhood. Following their arrival, the economic and cultural geographic remains more or less unchanged. For example, retail remains the same as does school composition. This finding point towards a possible two-fold explanation. The first, mentioned above, being middle income African Americans export their economic and educational needs to other neighborhoods. This because “they will not be the first.” The second, African American gentrifiers still fit into the prevailing African American culture in Central Harlem. Thus, the absence of the cultural tension that arises as a result of traditional gentrification.

“WE WON’T GO FIRST. BUT WE WILL FOLLOW THE WHITES.”

-JOANNA

CONCLUSION

The original hypothesis posited African American gentrifiers could have the same impact on educational equality as white gentrifiers. The hypothesis failed. This is mainly attributable to the lack of mixing between blacks of varying socioeconomic classes. Even when opting to move into low income black neighborhoods, black gentrifiers maintain an observable distance from the existing population. This is different from traditional gentrification. In fact it is completely opposite.

In addition to this "distance," the interviews also revealed the significance of race in socioeconomic mobility. Each participant stated they would not send their child to a mostly black primary or secondary school. While each interview offered a different reason, the commonality is the idea exposure to whiteness and mastering whiteness is an important part of upward mobility. Some gave the example of co-workers who could not progress professionally because the co-worker could not fit into dominate white culture. Others gave hypotheticals on why their children needed to learn and understand white norms. Still others reflected on the role exposure played on the success of their now adult children. Despite the individual reasoning, race is central. Each expressed is the idea that race is so heavily ingrained in American institutions, not knowing about the culture and norms of whites undermines blacks' ability to maneuver and ascend in American institutions. Moreover, even having attained middle income status, black gentrifiers still view their identity and mobility in the context of a larger white structure. In other words, whites of equal or greater socioeconomic

status serve as the reference group to black gentrifiers. Other blacks are not the reference groups. Hence, the distance between black gentrifiers and the non gentrifying black community. Black and status, then, become seemingly mutually exclusive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two broad sets of recommendations. First, black-led gentrification must be studied in greater detail. Educational equality is one very small aspect of gentrification. In this case, it is not even factor. On the other hand, the very different pattern of gentrification executed by African Americans is an extraordinarily interesting factor. Future study, should engage more participants than the 7 interviewed here. The present research is limited by time and scope. While the discussions were fruitful, a greater number will yield more generalizable results.

Second, it may be worthwhile to develop design programming that invites the participation of both the black gentry and the existing black population. In contrast to the class identity assumed by most of my interviewees, maintaining and promoting racial identity in a black neighborhood is a key part of upward mobility even for the black gentry. In essence, intragroup class and race politics are important.

As demonstrated here, African Americans are not a monolithic group. Theorizing both their self and group interests is complex. Some scholars argue the black middle class has made great strides since their initial emergence. Others consider their mobility glacier, minuscule, and at times even

stagnant. In either case, the history of the black middle class only dates back to the early 20th century. Thus, it is not without reason to infer that for many blacks, even those in the middle class, members of their social networks (ie. family) may belong to lower socioeconomic groups.

In addition, in the case of black-led gentrification, there are inevitably at least some physical spaces in which the the black gentry and the existing black population cross paths. This combination of both race and sharing a neighborhood has political and policy implications that affect the upward mobility for all blacks involved. Race matters a great deal in American life-especially for people of color. In spite of class status, it is arguable that race carry greater weight. As mentioned above, Central Harlem is currently experiencing another renaissance. As it develops and invites gentry from outside the African American race, the degree of social

separation between middle class blacks and poor blacks will be narrowed as Harlem takes on the social and racial dynamics of the larger American framework. Furthermore, as local community leaders reflect the changing demographics, inspiring racial pride and solidarity may help build a policy coalition that includes, protects, and advances African Americans.

Middle class African Americans have previously taken on this charge in their earliest history, the civil rights era, and again in the 1990's. This partnering of the black middle class with low income blacks has resulted in a bundle of rights, which created an opportunity for all blacks to access socioeconomic mobility. For middle class blacks, developing a sound policy coalition can only serve to push forward their interests as well. In a racially polarized city and country however, it helps by joining forces with poor blacks as well.



References

- Andrews, L.E. (2015). Stanford Study Finds Blacks and Hispanics Need Higher Incomes than Whites to Live in Affluent Neighborhoods. *Stanford Graduate School of Education*. Retrieved from <https://ed.stanford.edu>.
- Bloomfield Cucchiara, M. (2013). *Marketing Schools Marketing Cities: Who Wins and Who Loses when Schools become Urban Amenities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Cashin, S. (2004). *The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class are Undermining the American Dream*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- Chetty R., Hendren, N., & Katz., Lawrence. (2015). *The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment*. New York, New York: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Coates, T. (2015). *Between the World and Me*. New York, New York: Penguin Random House
- Duncan, J. G., & Murnane, J. R. (2013). *Restoring Opportunity: The Crisis of Inequality and the Challenge for American Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Durant, T., & Louden, J. (1986). The Black Middle Class in America: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. *Phylon*. Atlanta, GA: Clark Atlanta University, 47(4), 261.
- Freeman, L. (2006). *There Goes the Hood*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Hardaway, C. R., & Mcloyd, V. C. (2009). "Escaping Poverty and Securing Middle Class Status: How Race and Socioeconomic Status Shape Mobility Prospects for African Americans During the Transition to Adulthood." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(2), 242–256. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9354-z>.
- Journalist's Resource. (2014). *School Resegregation, Race and America's Future*. Retrieved from <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society>
- Kozol, J. (2005). *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.
- Lacy, R. K. (2007). *Blue Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A., & Goyette, K. *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*. (2014). New York, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

- LeGates, T. R., & Stout, F. *The City Reader*. (2011). New York, New York: Rutledge Publishing.
- Pattillo, M. (2008). *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Pattillo, M. (2000). *Black Pickett Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Massey, S. D., & Denton, A. N. (1993). *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Urban Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- National Bureau of Economic Research. (2005). *Separate when Equal? Racial Inequality and Residential Segregation*. Cambridge, MA: Bayer, P., Fang, H., & McMillan, R.
- National Bureau of Economic Research. (2014). *Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., & Saez, E.
- New York City Department of City Planning. Manhattan Community District 10 Profile. Retrieved from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb10/html/about/about.shtml>.
- Reardon, F. S., Fox, L., & Townsend, J. (2015). Neighborhood Income Composition by Race and Income, 1990-2009. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 660(1), 78-97.
- Reeves, R., & Rodrigue, E. (2015). Five Bleak Facts on Black Opportunity. *Brookings Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2015/01/15-mlk-black-opportunity-reeves>.
- Runnymede Perspectives (2015). *The Runnymede School Report: Race, Education, and Inequality in Contemporary Britain*. (Eds.) Alexander, Claire, Weekes-Bernard, Debbie and Arday, Jason (Eds.). London, UK: London School of Economics.
- Schwartz, H. (2010). *Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland*. Washington D.C.: The Century Foundation.
- Smith, N. (1996). *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. New York: Routledge.
- White, B. G. (2015, January 19). "How Black Middle Class Kids become Poor Adults." *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/01/howblack-middle-class-kids-become-black-lower-class-adults/384613/>.

Wilson, J. W. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Appendix A
Interview schedule

Neighborhood and educational background.

Tell me a little about your current neighborhood.

What about your educational background? Where did you go to school?;what did you study?; tell me about your pre-k through 12 schools/experiences.

How do you feel your own educational/neighborhood experiences have impacted your economic circumstances as an adult?

Do you stay abreast of current research involving education or neighborhoods?

How do you think desegregation of schools and neighborhoods is impacting educational equality for black students?; for low-income black students?

How have you seen race and class impact your own education?

Why do you think a great deal of education research considers race and class?

Do you think the African American middle-class has a responsibility to impact the academic success of low-income African American students?

Do you think there is a role for middle-class African Americans in the educational quality for low-income African American students?

How do you envision this role being executed?

How do you think the African American middle-class is impacting education for low-income black students?

How do you think the white middle-class is impacting education for low-income black students?

Do you think the African American middle-class has a comparable impact on low-income black students /white middle-class?

Have you seen instances when African American students do better in adulthood, economically, when they live and go to school with white middle-class students? Please describe.

Have you seen instances when African American students do better in adulthood, economically, when they live and go to school with other black students? Please describe.

Research shows mixed income but mostly African American schools are rare. Why do you think this is the case? Please explain.

Research also shows that African Americans who tend to make above a certain income make an effort to live separately from low-income African Americans. Why do you think this is so?

In what ways do you currently interact with African Americans who belong to different economic groups than yourself?

What are your thoughts on living in the same neighborhood as low-income African Americans?

Can you envision mixed income mostly African American neighborhoods and schools?

Do you think race matters in educational equality?

If you consider yourself middle class, what influences neighborhood choice? What about school choice?

Do you have children? Tell me about factors that influenced your decision on where to send your children to school?

Do consider race a factor when making educational decisions?

How do you feel your child's educational experiences are/have impacted their economic circumstances as adults?

Can you describe your ideal pre-k through 12 school.

What lessons do you think can be learned from the segregation of U.S. public schools and educational equality for low income african americans?

Appendix B Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions.

Age: What is your age?

- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old
- 75 years or older

Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity.

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Other

Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received.*

- No schooling completed
- Nursery school to 8th grade
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, no degree
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate degree

Marital Status: What is your marital status?

- Single, never married
- Married or domestic partnership
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated

Family Status: I am a parent and/or legal guardian?

- Yes
- No

Employment Status: Are you currently...?

- Employed for wages
- Self-employed
- Out of work and looking for work
- Out of work but not currently looking for work
- A homemaker
- A student
- Military
- Retired
- Unable to work

Income: As a parent my children qualify/ or qualified for free or reduced lunch

- Yes
- No